

In the claims: The claims are as follows.

1. (Currently amended) A digital communication system (20) having comprising: a symbol generator (21) and a modulator (22), the symbol generator (21) for translating a bit stream into a symbol stream based on a predetermined signal constellation (30), each symbol in the symbol stream for representing a predetermined even number of consecutive bits in the bit stream, the modulator (22) using configured to use a predetermined modulation scheme to modulate a carrier signal with the symbol stream so as to provide a modulated carrier signal, characterized in that wherein the signal constellation (30) has a dimensionality that is at least four and is a multiple of two, and that each symbol of the signal constellation (30) corresponds to an ordered set of at least two sets of two or more numbers, and further characterized in that wherein for each of the at least four-dimensional symbols, the modulator (22) is configured to modulate the carrier signal using in turn each of the at least two corresponding sets of two or more numbers.

2. (Currently amended) The digital communication system of claim 1 further characterized in that wherein each symbol of the signal constellation is located in the signal constellation so as to be separated from any other symbol by at least a distance of $a^5 P^{1/2} / b$, where $a = 2^{1/4}$ and $b = (1 + 2^{1/2})^{1/2}$ and P is the power radiated in transmitting one symbol.

3. (Currently amended) A method by which a digital communication system (20) transmits a bit stream, comprising:

, the digital communication system (20) having a symbol generator (21) and a modulator (22), the a symbol generator (21) for translating the a bit stream into a symbol stream based on a predetermined signal constellation (30), wherein each symbol in the

symbol stream representing a predetermined even number of consecutive bits in the bit stream, and

a ~~the~~ modulator (22) using a predetermined modulation scheme to modulate a carrier signal with the symbol stream so as to provide a modulated carrier signal,

characterized in that ~~wherein~~ the signal constellation (30) has a dimensionality that is at least four and is a multiple of two, and ~~that~~ each symbol of the signal constellation (30) corresponds to an ordered set of at least two sets of two or more numbers, and further ~~characterized in that~~ ~~wherein~~ for each of the at least four-dimensional symbols, the modulator (22) modulates the carrier signal using in turn each of the at least two corresponding sets of two or more numbers.

4. (Currently amended) The method of claim 3, ~~further~~ ~~characterized~~ wherein ~~in that~~ each symbol of the signal constellation is located in the signal constellation so as to be separated from any other symbol by at least a distance of $a^5P^{1/2}/b$, where $a=2^{1/4}$ and $b=(1+2^{1/2})^{1/2}$ and P is the power radiated in transmitting one symbol.